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Anna Letitia Barabauld's Poetic Vision: Community, Imagination, and the Quotidian

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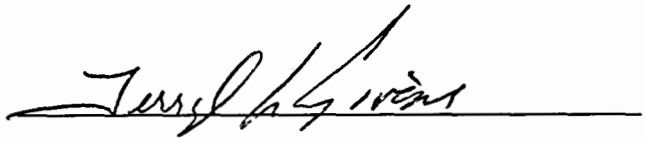
This thesis examines Anna Letitia Barbauld's impulse towards community, an impulse which places her outside the canonical Romantic tradition dominated by the "egotistical sublime." Arising out of the poet's attempt to reconcile empathy and solitude, the "egotistical sublime" is an intense and elevated experience of inwardness that seeks connectedness but often ignores or swallows up the Other. Critiquing and responding to the egotistical sublime, Barbauld refuses to objectify other people or deny practical reality. In her poetic vision, Barbauld respects the integrity of who or what is different from or other than her self. She presents practical involvement with the community as a dynamic source of creative inspiration in her depictions of the mutuality of romantic and familial love, the integration of friendship and imagination, and social activism. Furthermore, Barbauld celebrates a demystified quotidian, for she sees mundane detail as nurturing the shared, common experience of community.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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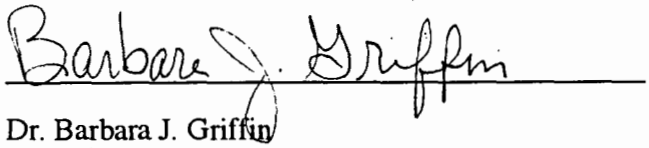

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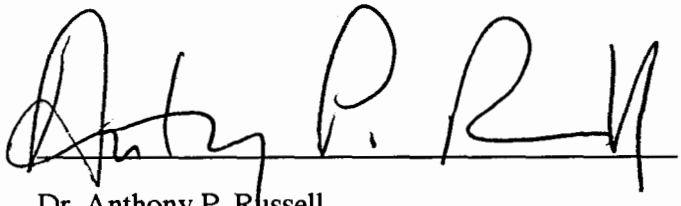

Dr. Anthony P. Russell

ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD'S POETIC VISION: COMMUNITY, IMAGINATION, AND THE QUOTIDIAN

By

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Preface

I have chosen to write my master's thesis on Anna Letitia Barbauld because she is a talented writer who has not received as much critical attention as she deserves. Also, poetry has always claimed a special part of me, as I compose my own and as I read the work of others. Barbauld's poetry is powerfully moving. Critiquing and responding to the egotistical sublime, she involves the community, imagination, and the quotidian in her poetic vision.

I wish to thank the literary critics who have awakened recent interest in studying Romantic women writers. Scholarly essays have been published in such collections as *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices* (Feldman and Kelley), *Romanticism and Feminism* (Mellor), and *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837* (Wilson and Haefner). Several recent anthologies have made the work of Romantic women poets much more accessible. The interested reader should consult the following: *Romantic Women Poets* (Ashfield), *The "Other" Eighteenth Century* (Uphaus and Foster), and *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (Lonsdale). Paula R. Feldman's *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era* is forthcoming in 1997. Special thanks should go to William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft, for their critical edition of Barbauld's poetry.

Above all, I wish to thank those people who were instrumental in helping me through the process of completing my master's thesis. My thesis director, Dr. Terryl L. Givens, offered me invaluable advice with his usual tact and grace. I am grateful for his constructive criticism and positive encouragement. I also appreciate the helpful suggestions of Dr. Barbara J. Griffin and Dr. Anthony P. Russell. I am indebted to the University of Richmond and the Boatwright librarians. As for my parents, I will always cherish their unconditional love and support.

Table of Contents

With the publication of her *Poems* in 1773, favorable reviews welcomed Anna Letitia Barbauld into the literary world.[1] However, Barbauld has traditionally been left out of English literature anthologies, condemned to the murky depths of obscurity.[2] Why has this talented British poet of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries been undeservedly marginalized? Perhaps she has never achieved the status of a major literary figure because her impulse towards community places her outside the mainstream Romantic tradition dominated by the "egotistical sublime." In the poetry of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Keats, an ideal of empathy remains in tension with a predilection towards solitude. Believing that the Romantic quest for connection in solitude leads to self-absorption, Barbauld critiques the egotistical sublime. Barbauld offers an alternative which involves two related aspects of an impulse towards community. Her poetic vision depicts practical involvement with the community as a vital source of creative inspiration, and it celebrates a demystified quotidian.

Certainly, the canonical Romantic poets are concerned with expressing a sense of connectedness. John Keats refers to the "egotistical sublime" as something to be avoided. He opposes the "wordsworthian sublime" to his own "poetical Character":

> As to the poetical Character itself, (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a Member; that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen.[3]

Keats is distinguishing his own view of poetry as the product of empathy, or an identification that occurs with another outside of the poet's self, from the wordsworthian

sublime, which he believes leads to self-absorption. Keats does not recognize that his own poetry, like Wordsworth's, is marred by self-absorption. More often than not, the "egotistical sublime" occurs as the undesired precipitate of the attempt to reconcile empathy and solitude. Even William Wordsworth's egotistical imagination, as John Jones astutely notices, involves the search for relationship within solitude (54-110). The canonical Romantic poets often seek a connectedness to nature that will lead to an empathic relationship with other people. The poet may achieve a connectedness to nature; however, the attempt to reconcile the solitary mystical experience of nature with empathic relationship ultimately fails, for the poet projects his self onto other people. Thomas Weiskel defines the egotistical sublime as a "'positive' sublime that in the end would subsume all otherness" (49).[4] My use of the term "egotistical sublime" derives from a combination of Jones' and Weiskel's insights. Arising out of the poet's attempt to link empathy and solitude, the "egotistical sublime" is an intense and elevated experience of inwardness that seeks connectedness but often ignores or swallows up the practical reality of the Other.

Anna Letitia Barbauld seeks something other than this intense and solitary experience. Anne K. Mellor perspicaciously argues that "'feminine'" Romanticism "implicitly rejected the egotistical sublime" for "genres [that] create and sustain community" (*Romanticism & Gender* 11).[5] Barbauld does refuse to succumb to the egotistical sublime, which can neglect human beings as well as undervalue mundane detail. She sustains community through her recognition of the substantial reality of other people and through her rejoicing in the inherent worth of the familiar. Her poetry involves a respect for the integrity of who or what is different from or other than her self, a respect that is essentially at odds with canonical Romantic tradition.

The typical Romantic aspiration attempts a paradoxical reconciliation of empathy and solitude. However, reconciliation is never successfully achieved; empathy remains in

tension with solitude, creating a dissonance. In "Defence of Poetry" (written 1821), Percy Bysshe Shelley associates the moral implications of the imagination with empathy:

> The great secret of morals is Love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and the pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. (487-88)

In this passage, Shelley argues that the poet must identify with the feelings of another human being and convey that experience to the reader. However, in a passage preceding this depiction of empathy, Shelley describes the poet as "a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds" (486). Thus, Shelley encourages the poet to identify with another human being, but he locates the poet in a solitude in which he becomes preoccupied with his own sweet sounds. In his "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," William Wordsworth says, "the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion....He is the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying every where with him relationship and love" (80-81).[6] Wordsworth, like Shelley, desires to bring "relationship and love" to other people, but he does so through an abstract truth that brings humanity, as a collective entity, to *his* song ("singing a song in which all human beings join with *him*"). The poet projects *his* song as an abstract universality that will transcend all particular circumstances. There is no involvement with a real community. Although the poet is supposed to be "a man speaking to men," Wordsworth describes the poet as a great individual "pleased with his own passions and volitions" (77-78); Wordsworth betrays the actual readers for the solitary audience that consists solely of the poet's own self. The canonical Romantic poets' ideal of empathy is to identify with the emotions, sensations, and attitudes of other people; however, in reality, they most often project their imagination onto others instead of actually taking in someone else's feelings.

In the following essay, I will interweave analysis of this dissonance between empathy and solitude in canonical Romantic poetry with my exploration of Barbauld's critique of and response to the egotistical sublime.

Barbauld's Critique of the Egotistical Sublime

In "The Internalization of Quest-Romance," Harold Bloom refers to the quest of the Romantics "to widen consciousness as well as to intensify it," observing, however, that "the quest is shadowed by a spirit that tends to narrow consciousness to an acute preoccupation with self" (6). Barbauld would label this shadowing spirit as the attraction to solitude, and she exposes the danger of solitary inward reflection in her "To Mr. S. T. Coleridge" (1799).[7] William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft note that Barbauld wrote this poem after her first meeting with Coleridge: "That she immediately liked him, and also perceived the self-destructive tendencies of his temperament, this poem, written at the time, demonstrates" (296n101). In this poem, Barbauld warns the poet against the seduction of solitude:

> Dreams hang on every leaf; unearthly forms
> Glide thro' the gloom, and mystic visions swim
> Before the cheated sense. Athwart the mists,
> Far into vacant space, huge shadows stretch
> And seem realities; while things of life,
> Obvious to sight and touch, all glowing round
> Fade to the hue of shadows. *Scruples* here
> With filmy net, most like th'autumnal webs
> Of floating Gossamer, arrest the foot
> Of generous enterprize; and palsy hope
> And fair ambition, with the chilling touch
> Of sickly hesitation and blank fear.
> Nor seldom *Indolence* these lawns among
> Fixes her turf-built seat, and wears the garb
> Of deep philosophy, and museful sits,
> In dreamy twilight of the vacant mind,
> Soothed by the whispering shade. . .
> . . . . . .
> And loves the softened light and tender gloom;
> And, pampered with most unsubstantial food,
> Looks down indignant on the grosser world,
> And matter's cumbrous shapings. (7-23; 29-32)

The poet who embraces the egotistical sublime turns into a self-deluding abstract thinker, mistaking his own dreamlike visions for reality ("mystic visions swim / Before the cheated

sense"). Practical reality fades into an inconsequential background ("while things of life, / Obvious to sight and touch.../ Fade to the hue of shadows"). The poet may become unable to perform good deeds ("arrest the foot / Of generous enterprize"), or he may be paralyzed by melancholy fear ("with the chilling touch / Of sickly hesitation and blank fear"). Inward musing traps the mind ("In dreamy twilight of the vacant mind, / Soothed by the whispering shade") in an abstract transcendence which scorns the empirical world ("Looks down indignant on the grosser world, / And matter's cumbrous shapings"). Barbauld concludes the poem by advising Coleridge, "For friends, for country, chase each spleen-fed fog / That blots the wide creation— / Now Heaven conduct thee with a Parent's love!" (41-43). She advocates practical friendship, civic duty, and parental affection instead of the illusory seduction of egotistical musings.

Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1800) exemplifies Bloom's argument that the Romantic attempt to widen consciousness may give way to the spirit of solitude. Coleridge's effort to establish a sense of relation with others ultimately degenerates into a self-absorbed solitude. The physically injured speaker of "This Lime-Tree Bower" is searching for a connection to his friends who have left him to go on a walking excursion. J. Robert Barth asserts that empathy allows the poet to travel outside the self and experience the feelings of his friend, Charles Lamb (185). The poet is seeking a connectedness to nature that will lead to an empathic experience with his absent friends (Charles Lamb, Dorothy Wordsworth, and William Wordsworth). However, the point at which the narrative voice realizes his connection to nature immediately follows his reaction to seeing "the solitary humble bee" (58). The bee is singing to no one, just as the poet's imagination ultimately fails to incorporate the social. The joys of Charles Lamb are really "the joys we cannot share" (67). Thomas McFarland cites this poem as Coleridge's depiction of the solitary poet "rejoin[ing] a pastoral society" (21). He suggests that this union with the pastoral allows a kind of social "bonding" to occur (21).[8] However, I

would argue that any social bonding ultimately fails. The poet merges with the natural world but achieves no actual connection with other people:

> a delight
> Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
> As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
> This little lime-tree bower, have I not marked
> Much that has soothed me. Pale beneath the blaze
> Hung the transparent foliage; and I watch'd
> Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see
> The shadow of the leaf and stem above
> Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
> Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay
> Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps
> Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
> Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
> Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
> Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
> Yet still the solitary humble bee
> Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
> That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure (43-60)

The "delight" that the poet feels is a sublime experience within the solitude of nature. Though he claims to have empathically connected with his friends ("I am glad / As I myself were there!), the poet never does more than hypothetically construct[9] what he wants them to see. The poet depicts the excursion as the intense solitary experience of nature that he himself desires. His imagination has his friends encounter the awe-inspiring scenes of the "roaring dell," the "dark green file of long lank weeds," the "hilly fields and meadows," and the "slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles / Of purple shadow!" (10, 17, 23, 25-26). Furthermore, the lime-tree bower is supposedly no longer a prison because the poet feels the ecstasy evoked by the "transparent foliage," the "broad and sunny leaf," the "richly tinged" "walnut-tree," the "radiance" of the "ancient ivy," and the "fronting elms." The poet deceives himself into thinking that he has remedied the swallows' and the bat's silence by reveling in this beautiful plant life and in the singing of the solitary bee. The poet has deluded himself into thinking that connectedness to nature has led to an intensification of his relationship with his absent friends; in reality, however, his egotistical imagination

has brought him closer to nature but further away from people. He has constructed a solitary mystical experience within nature that excludes other people. In fact, he has become like the solitary bee.

In *Remarks on Mr. Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship*, Barbauld emphasizes the essentially social character of religious worship. She is implicitly criticizing the egotistical poet's claim that the individual can fully participate in the divine religious experience in solitude:

> And can he who, not satisfied with the wide range of existence, calls for the sympathy of the inanimate creation, refuse to worship with his fellow-men? Can he who bids "Nature attend," forget to "join every living soul" in the universal hymn? Shall we suppose companions in the stillness of deserts, and shall we overlook them amongst friends and townsmen? It cannot be! Social worship, for the devout heart, is not more a duty than it is a real want. (*Works* 429)

The egotistical poet, such as the speaker of Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," "calls for the sympathy of the inanimate creation" but ultimately "refuse[s] to worship with his fellow men." Barbauld, on the other hand, believes that everyone is at heart a social being. Not only is practical engagement with the community a moral necessity, it is a natural desire. Her philosophy places her in conflict with Romantic primitivism. She rejects Jean-Jacques Rousseau's premise that humanity's natural goodness in the solitude of nature is perverted by society. She insists that society does not corrupt but is the source of a powerful faith which links people together in empathic relationship:

> None of our feelings are of a more communicable nature than our religious ones. If devotion really exists in the heart of each individual, it is morally impossible it should exist there apart and single. So many separate tapers, burning so near each other, in the very nature of things must catch, and spread into one common flame. (*Works* 420)[10]

Singing together in prayer, individual souls unite together in communal worship. For example, in Barbauld's "Hymn III: For Easter Sunday" (1773), individuals come together as a community to praise the Lord through the language of music:

> This day be grateful homage paid,
> And loud hosannas sung;
> Let gladness dwell in every heart,
> And praise on every tongue.
>
> Ten thousand differing lips shall join
> To hail this welcome morn (9-14)

The singing of a hymn is an act of communal worship. Her poetry argues for the realization of self within community and against the destructive self-absorption of the egotistical sublime.

Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude* (1816) depicts another solitary individual who refuses to worship within a community. Seduced by the solitude of nature, the young poet ignores the Arab maiden who lovingly brings him food (129-39). After further wandering adventures, the poet begins to crave social interaction with another person; however, because he has lived in solitude for so long, his desire manifests itself in the form of an imaginary beautiful woman projected by his imagination. He dreams about falling in love with a "veiled maid" (151) who is a narcissistic image of himself: "Her voice was like the voice of his own soul / Heard in the calm of thought" (153-54). Earl R. Wasserman calls this desire a "thirst...for union with his own soul's ideal mirror-image" (29). Thomas Weiskel suggests that the mind is responding to an "anxiety of deprivation" by projecting the Other as an ideal self (145). The vision of the veiled maid dissipates because it is an illusory dream. The poet ultimately dies because Alastor, a fury of his inner mind, punishes him for his inability to establish the empathic connection for which he yearned. He fails to experience community because he attempts to identify with a narcissistic projection while he ignores the real woman, the Arab maiden.

As Marlon B. Ross observes, Shelley is aware that the egotistical sublime has negative consequences (*Contours* 146-47).[11] In his preface to *Alastor*, Shelley points out the danger of a self-absorbed imagination:

> They who...keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. (69-70)

Ross insightfully argues that Shelley's later poetry is an effort to revise masculine self-possession "into a community of shared desire, [while he simultaneously] appeals to tropes of masculine potency that disrupt the community he seeks to assemble" (*Contours* 121). I would suggest that "Ode to the West Wind" (1820) epitomizes Shelley's "disrupt[ion of] the community he seeks to assemble."[12] Shelley envisions social reformation instigated by the poetic language of the poet-prophet:

> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
> Be through my lips to unawakened Earth
>
> The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
> If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? (66-70)

Shelley paints the power of the poetic genius that will change the world. The problem with this solution, despite the poet's benevolent intentions, is that the substantial reality of other people is ultimately bypassed. The poet is converting people through conquest rather than relationship. He asks the wind to "Drive my dead thoughts over the universe / Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!" (63-64). *His thoughts* will transform the world; he is not compromising or interacting with others. The imagery of one poet's "trumpet of a prophecy" suggests a call to battle: the rebellious individual is struggling against the rest of society. The only true connection in the poem is between nature and the poet. He wants to share in the impetuous passions of the wind:

> If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
> If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
> A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
>
> The impulse of the strength
> . . . . . .
> Be thou, Spirit fierce,
> My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one! (43-46; 61-62)

In this cosmic empathic connection with nature, the self remains isolated from other people. Recall that Barbauld asks, "And can he who, not satisfied with the wide range of existence, calls for the sympathy of the inanimate creation, refuse to worship with his fellow-men?" (*Works* 429). Shelley is not satisfied with the current status of the world, and he therefore invokes the "sympathy of the inanimate creation" in an effort to effect social change. He wants to use his connection with nature to allow him to create a better society; however, he disrupts community with his defiant reliance upon the special transformative powers of the individual poet. The solitary genius, as in *Alastor*, ends up refusing to worship with his fellow members of the community.

As in Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," the protagonist of Byron's *Manfred* (1817) is the defiant individual. Instead of trying to transform the existing society, however, Manfred creates his own ethical system outside of society. Byron depicts Manfred as the alienated, noble hero:

> My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe
> The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
> Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
> Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge
> Into the torrent, and to roll along
> On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave
> Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow.
> In these my early strength exulted; or
> To follow through the night the moving moon,
> The stars and their development; or catch
> The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
> Or to look, list'ning, on the scattered leaves,
> While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
> These were my pastimes, and to be alone (2.2.62-75)

Manfred passionately embraces nature, but his solitude provides the circumstances which favor his tendency to have "no sympathy with breathing flesh" (2.2.57). Whatever desire for empathy that Manfred does have is channeled into his connection with his sister Astarte. He seeks to reconcile his solitary life with his sincere love for Astarte. However, Manfred's egotistical imagination objectifies her, for he constructs her as an ideal image rather than relating with her as a real person.[13] His imagination projects her as an idealized copy of his self:

> She was like me in lineaments—her eyes,
> Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
> Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
> But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty;
> She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
> The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
> To comprehend the universe: nor these
> Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
> Pity, and smiles, and tears—which I had not;
> And tenderness—but that I had for her;
> Humility—and that I never had.
> Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own—
> I loved her, and destroy'd her! (2.2.105-17)

As Jerome J. McGann observes, "The female counterparts of Byron's heroes are similarly various, but in every case they correspond exactly to the state of the hero's soul which they inhabit. They objectify the passionate impulses in the man whose imagination made them what they are. This is as much to say that none of them are truly 'persons'" (*Fiery* 189).[14] Manfred's attempt to reconcile solitude and empathy results in the egotistical sublime, where the self swallows up the identity of the Other. In addition to nurturing a solitude in nature which leads further away from other people, the egotistical sublime's projection of the imagination turns people into objects.

Naturally, Barbauld would be opposed to such objectification, the antithesis to true community. In her "Inscription for an Ice-House" (written c. 1793), she implicitly critiques the egotistical sublime's commodification of women:

> [Winter] Congeals the melting peach, the nectarine smooth,
> Burnished and glowing from the sunny wall:
> Darts sudden frost into the crimson veins
> Of the moist berry; moulds the sugared hail:
> Cools with his icy breath our flowing cups;
> Or gives to the fresh dairy's nectared bowls
> A quicker zest. (21-28)

"Man, the great magician" (4) has harnessed Winter for the purposes of prolonging the value of the beautiful feminine objects (peach, nectarine, berry, sugared hail, flowing cups, and nectared bowls). Isobel Armstrong has astutely observed that the icehouse both destroys and preserves the fruit and dairy products, which are associated with the feminine Other (21-23).[15] The imagery of "Congeals," "Darts sudden frost," and "gives.../ A quicker zest" intimates masculine penetration into the female body during the act of sexual intercourse. This intrusion of coldness, associated with masculine penetration, parallels how the egotistical sublime, in the attempt to preserve, destroys the "glowing" uniqueness of the Other. (The fruit's natural environment is the "summer [that] glows around" (9).) The icehouse suggests the destructive egotistical sublime that objectifies the woman in the effort to preserve her beauty in poetry.

John Keats' poetry exemplifies this canonical Romantic tendency to objectify the beautiful woman. For example, the beloved mistress is imprisoned by the male's gaze in "Ode on Melancholy" (1820): "Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave, / And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes" (19-20). The poet "feeds" upon the beauty of the beloved, as if she were a preserved fruit or dairy product from Barbauld's "Ice-House." He has constructed her identity within the restrictive limits of a commodity valued for its aesthetic pleasure. This objectification of the mistress is one of the specific features which may surface when the egotistical sublime occurs as the result of trying to reconcile empathy with solitude. The speaker desires to empathize with the reader. Using poetic language as a healing medicine for desolation, he warns the reader against yielding to the despair that leads to suicide: "No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist / Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its

poisonous wine..." (1-2). In an effort to ease the suffering of the individual, the poet offers melancholy as the treatment for despair:[16]

> Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
> Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
> Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
> Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
> Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
> And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes. (15-20)

In spite of the benevolent intention to comfort another person, the poet's advice ultimately results in egotistical contemplation. He tells the individual to glut his sorrow upon the rose, the sand-wave, or the peonies. This solitary experience with nature leads away from practical interaction with other people; and, as we have seen, the woman becomes just another object of beauty to satiate the poet's imagination.

Barbauld's unfinished poem "To Lord Byron" (written late 1810s or early 1820s) articulates another critique of the egotistical sublime. A Unitarian Dissenter who emphasizes the importance of devout communal worship, Barbauld is astonished to find Byron writing on biblical topics in his *Hebrew Melodies* (1815).[17] In "The Wild Gazelle" of the *Hebrew Melodies,* Byron throws doubt on humanity's access to the paradise of Judah's land:

> But we must wander witheringly,
> In other lands to die;
> And where our fathers' ashes be,
> Our own may never lie:
> Our temple hath not left a stone,
> And Mockery sits on Salem's throne. (19-24)

In Byron's poem, people cannot live in the peaceful atmosphere of "Judah's hills" (1). The wild gazelle, on the other hand, "Exulting yet may bound, / And drink from all the living rills / That gush on holy ground" (2-4). In effect, the wild gazelle becomes a solitary beautiful object with which the individual can never unite. The egotistical sublime objectifies the solitary gazelle instead of embracing community. Barbauld responds to

Byron's skepticism about humanity's access to a heavenly paradise by intimating that he has closed himself off from the communal springs of faith:

> In vain thy infant lips the Muse
> Bathed largely in Castalian dews;
> Those springs to thee are closed
> Which welling out o'er pastures green
> With living waters drest the scene
> Where Judah's king reposed.
>
> Forbear—till time shall bring the hour
> Thy softened heart shall feel a power
> To touch thy lips with fire,
> And all be there of earth or heaven (7-16)

The softer poetic imagination inspired by a divine power would allow the poet to live within "Judah's hills" in interaction with other people. Barbauld's symbolism of the "living waters" connected to "Judah's king" suggests the Israelite community led by David. In addition to the Israelite community, the "living waters" also refer to Christian community. The social ritual of baptism not only involves acceptance of Christ, but also reinforces participation in communal worship. Jesus Christ, another "king" from the line of Judah, will touch Byron's lips with a power which will allow him to see "all be there of earth or heaven"—to experience Christian community. On Byron's death in 1824, Barbauld writes to her friends Dr. and Mrs. Estlin, "By the way, are you not sorry Byron is dead, just when he was going to be a hero? He has filled a leaf in the book of fame, but it is a very blotted leaf" (*Works* 2.136-37). One of Byron's blots, from Barbauld's point of view, could very well be the egotistical inclination of his poetry. Barbauld's poetry subtly exposes the egotistical sublime as that which turns away from community and ignores or objectifies the reality of the Other.

The Community as a Source for Barbauld's Poetic Vision: Mutuality of Romantic and Familial Love

The canonical Romantic tradition seeks to usher in a revolutionary, utopian era, but its tendency towards idealized, abstract transformations leaves little interest for practical involvement in the community. Barbauld, on the other hand, presents community as a dynamic source for her powerful poetic vision in her depictions of the mutuality of romantic and familial love, the integration of friendship and imagination, and social activism. We will first turn towards an examination of this mutuality of love.

According to some feminist literary critics, Barbauld caves into patriarchal society's demands that the wife's primary and only role should be to serve her husband by pleasing him. For example, Donna Landry points to "The Rights of Woman" (written c. 1790s) as an example of Barbauld's anti-feminist stance that women should abandon the quest for equality (273). It does prima facie appear that Barbauld has consigned women to a submissive role. Barbauld probably wrote "The Rights of Woman" in response to Mary Wollstonecraft's objection to her earlier poem "To a Lady, with some painted Flowers" (1773).[18] As in her accusation against Milton, Wollstonecraft reproaches Barbauld for submitting to an ideology that objectifies women.[19] The last line of "To a Lady" says, "Your best, your sweetest empire is—to please." Wollstonecraft obviously took Barbauld's definition of "to please" to mean that the woman's only role should be to give the man sensual pleasure through her aesthetic beauty. This poem is narrated from a male speaker's perspective, and his definition of "to please" may coincide with what Wollstonecraft thinks Barbauld means.[20] However, underlying that last statement of the male narrative voice, is the definition of "to please" from the absent woman's perspective. Barbauld gives this absent woman's perspective through the female narrative voice of "The Rights of Woman."

The female speaker describes what the phrase "to please" truly means to Barbauld: "to participate in 'mutual love.'"

> Then, then, abandon each ambitious thought,
> Conquest or rule thy heart shall feeble move,
> In Nature's school, by her soft maxims taught,
> That separate rights are lost in mutual love. (29-32)

Instead of trying to conquer her lover, the woman should help to establish a relationship built upon interdependence. Instead of becoming selfishly obsessed with "separate rights," the couple agrees to engage in "mutual love." No one becomes the servant of the other, but both share in the warmth, healing friendship, and harmony of love.

By advocating relationship which centers around reciprocity, Barbauld implicitly critiques the egotistical sublime's tendency to objectify loved ones. For example, recall Keats' objectification of the beautiful mistress in "Ode on Melancholy" and Byron's depiction of the beloved Astarte as Manfred's narcissistic projection. (See "Barbauld's Critique of the Egotistical Sublime.") Also, consider Keats' "Ode to Psyche" (1820). Despite the poet's desire to empathize, signified by the open casement that will "let the warm Love in!" (67),[21] the relationship between the poet and Psyche is not one of mutuality. As Margaret Homans observes, the women in Keats' poetry become "objects of (visual) description" ("Keats" 348).[22] The speaker calls Psyche "the loveliest vision far / Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!" (24-25). Claiming to be her "priest" (50), he sets the female figure upon a pedestal as a beautiful object to be worshipped. The speaker is indulging his own melancholy mood when he says, "So let me be thy choir, and make a moan / Upon the midnight hours" (44-45). The poet reduces the beloved woman, in this case Psyche, to a passive reflection of his own imagination (figuring the woman as his own psyche).

In "The Rights of Woman," the woman does not become objectified. Barbauld does satirize the woman whom she sees as fanatically obsessed with obtaining equal rights. She

asserts that when such radically fanatic efforts "Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend," that woman is no longer free (19-20). Aggressiveness leads only to "Subduing and [being] subdued" (27); the men are made subjects by the women, and the women are objectified by the men. Barbauld recognizes that the desire to control leads to oppression on both sides. Her underlying thrust is to advise both men and women not to subsume the Other but to open up to each other through "mutual love" (32). The woman is not just the passive projection of the male's imagination, but she "pleases" by dynamically and virtuously engaging herself in shared connection, i.e., the mutuality of romantic love.

The egotistical sublime's objectification of loved ones often includes family members as well as the beloved mistress. (Or, as in the case of Byron's Astarte, the family member is the beloved mistress.) In *The Egotistical Sublime*, John Jones says, "For Wordsworth the family is the universe in microcosm, a complex of individuals related in their independence" (47). William Wordsworth endeavors to realize relationship through familial affection; however, his preference for solitude introduces a problematic conflict. "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" (1798)[23] exemplifies how this tension leads to an egotistical sublime that swallows up the identity of the sister, Dorothy. William Wordsworth does sincerely care about his sister: "My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make.../ And this green pastoral landscape, were to me / More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!" (121, 158-59). As Russell Noyes says, Wordsworth "projects his own present into his sister's future in a warmly felt and generous prayer for her as a worshiper of Nature" (67). Noyes accurately emphasizes that the prayer involves compassionate tenderness, but feminist critics explore what it means that W. Wordsworth "projects" his self onto Dorothy.[24] Her voice is swallowed up in the poet's egotistical imagination. The desired empathic connection between himself and his sister is never truly established. The speaker's acclamation, "Oh! yet a little while / May I behold in thee what I was once" (119-20) is the kind of yearning that projects his wish-fulfillment onto his sister.

Within the solitude of nature, he is constructing her to become his former self. Wordsworth insists that she will undergo the same melancholy process which he has himself experienced: her "wild ecstasies shall be matured / Into a sober pleasure" (138-39). He asserts that she shall not forget his vision (149-59). His engagement in prophesy, on some level, does turn into chiding "exhortations" (146), while Dorothy's voice remains muted. Interestingly enough, Susan J. Wolfson characterizes Dorothy Wordsworth's writing as the "poetics of community" as opposed to the emphasis on the self of the male Romantic poets (162).[25] Such arguments and mine about Barbauld support Mellor's analysis that female Romantic poets tend to reject the egotistical sublime for a sustaining of community (*Romanticism & Gender*).[26]

Similarly to William Wordsworth, Coleridge desires to establish an empathic connection within the family in "Frost at Midnight" (1798). Despite the expression of parental affection, however, the poet still succumbs to the egotistical sublime. Like the poet's sincere feelings towards his sister in "Tintern Abbey," the father obviously loves his son:

> Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
> Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
> Fill up the interspersed vacancies
> And momentary pauses of the thought!
> My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
> With tender gladness, thus to look at thee (44-49)

Coleridge does poetically represent parental affection. However, the tension between solitude and empathy creates a dissonance, and Coleridge projects his imagination onto his son:

> But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
> By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
> Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
> Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
> And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
> The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
> Of that eternal language (54-60)

By experiencing nature, the son is supposed to comprehend an "eternal language," a universal communication which empathically connects together all things and people. Although the son may feel an abstract, divine power that pervades the world, this goal of universal communication can never be fully achieved because, in this process of seeking connectedness through nature, he would neglect the practical reality of other people. The residents of "the great city" (52) would be forgotten. The "silent icicles" and "the secret ministry of the frost" (72-73) suggest an exclusionary mystical revelation within the solitude of nature. Instead of establishing any truly empathic relationship, the poet has narcissistically projected his own desires onto his child. Coleridge has constructed what "shalt" (54, 58) happen to his baby through his own poetic prophecy. Enraptured by the dream of his son's fulfilling his own aspiration to "see and hear" the "eternal language," the poet's egotistical imagination has restricted his son to a mysticism which would ultimately result in exclusionary, solitary experience.

In contrast to the egotistical poet's narcissistic projection, Barbauld explores a maternal connection that genuinely engages in the mutuality of familial affection. In "To a little invisible Being who is expected soon to become visible" (written c. 1795), Barbauld uses the third person to refer to the mother, but the tone suggests the kind of endearment used when the mother says to the baby, "Mommy loves you." Unlike Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," Barbauld expresses parental devotion without prescribing any certain fate to the child:

> She longs to fold to her maternal breast
> Part of herself, yet to herself unknown;
> To see and to salute the stranger guest,
> Fed with her life through many a tedious moon.
>
> Come, reap thy rich inheritance of love!
> Bask in the fondness of a Mother's eye!
> Nor wit nor eloquence her heart shall move
> Like the first accents of thy feeble cry.
>
> Haste, little captive, burst thy prison doors!
> Launch on the living world, and spring to light! (21-30)

The only imperative command here is for the baby to be born. When the infant "springs to light" from the womb into the world, this new "stranger guest" will have his or her own distinct personality. The mother will continue to radiate love, as her child will bask in it. This love is relational instead of egotistical, for she "sees" (or connects) while she "salutes" (or respects the individuality of) her child. The umbilical cord through which she literally fed the unborn life symbolically remains as a connection that nurtures without destroying. Jerome J. McGann has analyzed this process of birth in "To a little invisible Being" as a development of both the child's and the mother's identity (*Poetics* 68-70). As the mother frees the baby from her womb, "the mother also gains her new life, that part of herself previously 'unknown' and 'invisible'" (*Poetics* 70). Self-identity develops by opening oneself up to new relations, sustained through the symbolic umbilical cord. The birth symbolizes the mutuality of love as a source of dynamic creativity for Barbauld's poetic vision. Barbauld is subverting the canonical Romantic poets' preference of solitude for poetic inspiration that values community.

The Community as a Source for Barbauld's Poetic Vision: The Integration of Friendship and Imagination

Barbauld's emphasis on the mutuality of love is a reaction against both objectification and the egotistical sublime's tendency to obscure the Other. In "The Rights of Woman," Barbauld suggests that aggressively asserting separate rights can lead to selfish obsession with only one's own rights, while engagement in a mutuality of love recognizes and respects the self as an individual relationally connected to another individual through empathy. In "To a little invisible Being who is expected soon to become visible," Barbauld uses umbilical cord imagery to represent the mutuality of love in which the mother and child both develop in a shared quest of self-identity. In a similar manner, Barbauld depicts friendship as another way that community becomes a dynamic source of poetic creativity, and this time Barbauld integrates friendship and imagination.

In "To the Baron de Stonne" (written 1786),[27] Barbauld intertwines imagination and friendship:[28]

> Let Fancy then and Friendship stray
> In Pleasure's flowery walks today,
> Today improve the social hours,
> And build today the Muse's bowers (55-58)

Barbauld is revising the message of the traditional carpe diem poem in which the lover is trying to persuade his beloved to have sexual intercourse. The speaker advises one not to despair if friends must literally part; instead, the imagination should seize the day by building "the Muse's bowers" of mutual friendship. In "Hymn VI: Pious Friendship" (1792), Barbauld finds poetic inspiration within the merged prayers of friends:

> Their streaming tears together flow
> For human guilt and mortal woe;
> Their ardent prayers together rise,
> Like mingling flames in sacrifice.

Together both they seek the place
Where GOD reveals his awful face;
How high, how strong, their raptures swell,
There's none but kindred souls can tell.

Nor shall the glowing flame expire
When nature droops her sickening fire;
Then shall they meet in realms above
A heaven of joy—because of love. (9-20)

As "kindred souls" who have shared common experiences, the friends are striving to communicate with God through language ("Their ardent prayers together rise"). Their future meeting in the joyous community of heaven suggests successful communication. Barbauld attributes her poetic inspiration to "pious friendship," for her Muse has become permeated with the poetic prayer of friendship's communal worship.

Friendship specifically becomes Barbauld's Muse in "Verses on Mrs. Rowe" (1773). Barbauld calls upon her friend Mrs. Rowe to actually become her Muse: "be thou my muse; / Thy gentle sweetness thro' my soul diffuse" (39-40). The speaker admires Mrs. Rowe because her devoutly religious, "pious hand" comforts "the poor" and "the mourner" through her good works (29). Mrs. Rowe's empathic interaction with other people actually improves the social conditions of the poor, the mourner, and others in need. Her practical and virtuous "charity and prayer" (42) establish a link with "every kindred breast" (30). Her gentle sweetness courses through others in a relational connection without subsuming their identity. In a letter to her friend Mrs. Beecroft, Barbauld emphasizes the importance of realizing the self through community: "May you experience, may you feel, all the sympathies, all the tender charities of every relation" (*Works* 2.75).[29] From Barbauld's perspective, friendship enhances one's capacity to feel empathy. Friendship's natural inclination towards empathy then stimulates the imagination into poetic expression. This process is the inverse of Shelley's depiction of poetry as engendering empathy in "Defence of Poetry" (487-88). Barbauld's relationship with Mrs. Rowe

encourages her towards empathic interaction with others, culminating in poetic expression that asks her friend to "be thou my muse."

In contrast, William Wordsworth refers to Coleridge in the *Prelude*[30] as "Oh Friend!" but is not invoking a Muse of friendship. For example, the speaker says, "Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt / In sympathy, that I have lengthened out, / With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale" (1.618-20). Wordsworth is merely implying that his colleague will be able to appreciate his work. Coleridge may sympathize because his own poetical imagination involves an elevated experience of inwardness; the two contemporaries share similar poetic visions. However, neither realizes the essential communal self through friendship as Barbauld does in her poetry. Instead, the poet in the *Prelude* turns inward to engage in "community with highest truth" (3.126). This "community" is a false one because it emanates from the solitary self instead of from empathy. The poet is ignoring the real community: he leaves his classmates behind at St. John's College, Cambridge ("ofttimes did I quit / My comrades" (3.91-93)) so that he can venture out by himself to find an abstract truth within the solitude of nature (3.90-126). He leaves behind "kindred, friends, and playmates, to partake / Love for the human creature's absolute self" (8.122-23). The eighth book of the *Prelude* is supposed to show love of nature leading to love of humanity, but the sight that gives the poet a sense of love of the human form is the figure of the solitary shepherd. Weiskel observes how the abstract egotistical sublime excludes the particular: "as the Romantic ego approaches godhead, the minute particulars which are the world fade out" (62). The poet's musing upon the solitary individual leads to a general, abstract love but excludes specific friends interacting within a community.

Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" (1807) exemplifies how the figure of the solitary individual becomes objectified in the poet's imagination. The speaker once again desires both empathy and solitude, which leads to a sliding into the egotistical sublime. The speaker is stunned into awe by the beautiful voice of the singing solitary reaper: "O listen!

for the Vale profound / Is overflowing with the sound" (7-8). He seeks connection, for he desires to carry her music forever in his heart (31). However, he watches her singing as he would stare at an interesting painting. He never interacts with her. He remembers an aesthetic ideal of her melancholy singing, but he turns away from her as he climbs up the hill (30). Frances Ferguson argues that Wordsworth's Romantic consciousness means solitude as "a peopled solitude, anthropomorphizing rocks and stones and trees, without encountering the pressures of a competing consciousness" (114). With someone like the solitary reaper or Lucy Gray, the poet objectifies the Other so that his imagination can then construct human attributes to reanimate the objects he has created. As a result, the distinct individuality of the Other, in the case of the "Solitary Reaper" the woman, becomes subsumed by the poet's egotistical imagination.

In addition to embracing a general abstract love instead of true engagement with the Other, canonical Romantic poetry tends to valorize the intense passion of the solitary poet. The "soft affections" of relational connection in "Verses written in an Alcove" (1773) contrast with the "ruder gust of passion" that Barbauld critiques:

> Choral songs and sprightly voices
> Echo from her cell shall call;
> Sweeter, sweeter than the murmur
> Of the distant water fall.
>
> Every ruder gust of passion
> Lull'd with music dies away,
> Till within the charmed bosom
> None but soft affections play (21-28)

The communal nature of "choral songs" are sweet, while the poetic vision of Coleridge's "Kubla Kahn" (written c. 1797-98) involves the tempestuous passion of a fountain erupting from a chasm (17-19). Barbauld recognizes that "the murmur / Of the distant water fall" turns into a dangerous cascade when one takes a closer look, and she would be the first to join in the cry, "Beware! Beware! / His flashing eyes, his floating hair!" (49-50). Coleridge portrays the alienation of the poet as a heroic quality, admiring the courage of

one who "on honey-dew hath fed, / And drunk the milk of Paradise" (53-54). Furthermore, the poet thinks that he empathizes with the damsel playing the dulcimer because he can bring to life "Her symphony and song" (43). Barbauld would view this pleasure dome as the illusory dream of a dangerously egotistical imagination that objectifies the Abyssinian maid.[31] Barbauld prefers the meeting of friends to solitary dreaming.

In "Verses written in an Alcove," Barbauld is presenting an alternative Muse, one that becomes associated with friendship:

> Not the Muse who wreath'd with laurel,
> Solemn stalks with tragic gait,
> And in clear and lofty vision
> Sees the future births of fate;
>
> Not the maid who crown'd with cypress
> Sweeps along in scepter'd pall,
> And in sad and solemn accents
> Mourns the crested hero's fall;
>
> But that other smiling sister,
> With the blue and laughing eye,
> Singing, in a lighter measure,
> Strains of woodland harmony (37-48)

Barbauld does not embrace the egotistical Muse who uses an elevated, prophetic language that constructs the identity of others through solemn vision (37-40). Nor is her Muse the beautiful woman entombed within melancholy lamenting for the idealized hero's misfortune (41-44). Instead, Barbauld's Muse is the "smiling sister" (45), who laughs and sings in "woodland harmony" (48). This nontraditional Muse rejoices in the everyday, harmonious music of sisterly love. Barbauld concludes the poem with the speaker's entreaty to her friend Lissy (an actual friend, not the projection of the speaker's imagination):[32]

> Then, when next the star of evening
> Softly sheds the silent dew,
> Let me in this rustic temple,
> LISSY! meet the Muse and you. (53-56)

The speaker is conversing with Lissy, earnestly inviting her to "meet" in interaction instead of posing as an object. Seeing community as a powerful source of creative inspiration,

Barbauld depicts friends gathering together (instead of having the poet turn away from the other person by climbing a hill). In this rustic meeting-place, "Choral songs and sprightly voices" (21) echo with the enticement of communication. The Muse will follow Lissy to the rustic cell (33-34), for Barbauld finds poetic inspiration in friendship.

Wordsworth praises Barbauld's last stanza of "Life" (written c. 1812), even wishing that he could have written these concluding lines:[33]

> Life! we've been long together,
> Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
> 'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
> Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;
> Then steal away, give little warning,
> Choose thine own time;
> Say not Good night, but in some brighter clime
> Bid me Good morning. (23-30)

Wordsworth may have valued this stanza because he mistakenly saw the speaker coming to terms with death in the solitude of an internal monologue. However, this stanza is not the solitary individual's inward musing, but rather Barbauld is emphasizing that life involves the conversation of a communal friendship. The speaker and Life continually interact with each other through shared experience, supporting one another "Through pleasant and through cloudy weather." Even after death, Life will continue the conversation, beginning with the words "Good morning." Barbauld personifies life as a friend because her imagination respects the integrity of the Other.

The Community as a Source for Barbauld's Poetic Vision: Social Activism

Most of Barbauld's poems fall within the range of subjects typical for women writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[34] Because women were generally considered to have a special sensitivity in the role of what Janet Todd terms "moral guardians" (18), it was deemed proper for them to use their domestic expertise to protest against social evils. Todd writes, "Women wrote feelingly on the slave trade and imprisonment, on the poor, on war victims and on the depressed and repressed....[In] women's poems the social ills of war, slavery and poverty were opposed simply by social affection" (60).[35] Barbauld does address these social issues. For example, she admonishes British society for not aiding in the effort against slavery in *The Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade* (1791), criticizes overzealous advocates of war in the concluding section of "The Invitation" (1773), and emphasizes the need to assist the indigent in "The First Fire" (written 1815). However, Barbauld does more than simply take advantage of the fact that social criticism was considered an appropriate subject for women writers. She specifically shapes her social criticism so that it furthers her confrontation with the egotistical sublime. In her poetry which posits social affection as a treatment against social wrongs, Barbauld is critiquing the egotistical sublime's tendency to overlook particular social conditions.

Before analyzing Barbauld's poetry, let us consider two famous canonical Romantic poems, in which people who need succor are slighted in the process of the poet's striving towards transcendence. William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" is descriptive of a psychological process that subsumes the Other. There are two main "Others" in "Tintern Abbey," Dorothy and the poor. I have already discussed Wordsworth's objectification of his sister. I would now like to look at what happens to the portrayal of the poverty-stricken

people shadowing the text of "Tintern Abbey." The poet's imagination endows the landscape with a quality of mystery. The smoke from the manufacturing industry becomes transformed into the "wreaths of smoke / Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!" (17-18). The vagrants are incorporated into what is supposed to be a positive, harmonious relationship which fosters a mystical awe toward nature. New Historical interpretations have recognized that this mystification tends to overlook real industrial and economic problems. Marjorie Levinson observes that Wordsworth's immersion in the transcendental ignores the destruction of the abbeys, the pollution of the river, the industrial smoke of charcoal burning, and the real suffering of the vagrants (29-37, 43-45). Like Levinson, McGann asserts that "Everything else has been erased—the abbey, the beggars and displaced vagrants, all that civilized culture creates and destroys, gets and spends. We are not permitted to remember 1793 and the turmoil of the French Revolution..." (*Romantic* 88). Such New Historical criticism accurately delineates the failure of "Tintern Abbey" to realistically portray the social conditions of the vagrant or the manufacturing worker.

Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" similarly glosses over particular social conditions. John M. Anderson asserts that Barbauld advocates social activism instead of the unreliable, escapist mood of Coleridge's "secret ministry" of the frost (724-25, 732). Coleridge's concluding lines do encourage the reader to become stationary, entranced by the beauty of the frost: "the secret ministry of frost / Shall hang them up in silent icicles, / Quietly shining to the quiet Moon" (72-74). The "secret ministry" evokes a mystical, solitary experience within nature but does not involve ministering to other people. Coleridge even idealizes the impoverished predicament of the poor:

> I dreamt
> Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower
> Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
> From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
> So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
> With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
> Most like articulate sounds of things to come!

So gazed I, till the soothing things I dreamt
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams! (31-35).

Just as he becomes caught up in the mystification process of watching the frost form icicles, the speaker also becomes seduced by the aesthetic pleasure of listening to the church bells. Associating the "poor man" with the beautifully sweet church music, he is constructing poverty as an idyllic lifestyle. The poetic language thereby circumvents the practical reality of the destitute.

Responding to the egotistical sublime's glossing over of social responsibility, Barbauld emphasizes the importance of interdependence in society. Although it is a lighthearted comic episode on one level, "The Mouse's Petition" (1773) also suggests that the individual should engage in virtuous social action. The poem is Barbauld's plea to her friend Dr. Priestley to release a mouse that he was using in his experiments with gases. As Marlon B. Ross asserts, she focuses on this specific circumstance in order to inspire the individual to follow the duty of living as one's conscience dictates ("Configurations" 100). Barbauld warns against the consequences of not recognizing someone else's rights:

Beware, lest in the worm you crush
A brother's soul you find;
And tremble lest thy luckless hand
Dislodge a kindred mind. (33-36)

A bond exists between humanity and such other living creatures as the worm or the mouse. The narrative voice, which is merged with the first person perspective of the mouse, suggests that animal experiments violate this bond. Despite the scientific reasons for conducting his research, Dr. Priestley lets the mouse go when he finds this poem attached to the mouse's cage because he is touched by Barbauld's plea for mercy.[36] The poem concludes with a hopeful prayer that encourages others towards social activism:

So, when destruction lurks unseen,
Which men, like mice, may share,
May some kind angel clear thy path,
And break the hidden snare. (45-48)

This petition invites one to give assistance, even when the victim does not know he or she is in danger. By choosing to behave as such a "kind angel," the self realizes the importance of fulfilling social responsibility.

In "To Dr. Aikin, on his Complaining that she neglected him" (written 1768), Barbauld again emphasizes virtuous action:

> Content remain within thy bounded sphere,
> For fancy blooms, the virtues flourish there.
> To thee, fair fate the pleasing task decrees,
> To bring the sick man health, the tortured ease;
> . . . . . .
> Mine, the low murmurs of the tuneful reed;
> Yet when fair friendship shall unloose my tongue,
> My trembling voice shall ne'er refuse the song (60-63, 93-95)

Her feminine poetry, the tuneful reed, integrates friendship, fancy, and virtue. The poet does not overlook the specific virtuous social activities of nursing the sick and comforting the suffering.

"The First Fire" (written 1815) is another call to fulfill the self's communal potential by engaging in virtuous social action. John M. Anderson insightfully suggests that the poem disappoints the expectations of the Promethean myth: the goal of obtaining the fire of abstract knowledge is replaced with the goal of making realistic, practical improvements (722-23). Throughout the poem, Barbauld scrutinizes different responses that people have to the fire. For the wealthy, the fire means "costly board," "sparkling glass," "wit," "music," and "cheer" (21-22), a scene from which the poor would be excluded because they do not have the money for the "costly board." For the "solitary man," the fire becomes his only "Companion" (48). He converses with the fire, instead of with other people, thereby becoming absorbed in his own contemplative imaginings. He even finds himself falling into the illusion that he is not lonely (57), a self-delusion which decreases the likelihood that he will make any effort to remedy the situation. Similarly, the fire becomes the "confidant" (65) of "the bashful poet" (58). The poet muses in front of the fire "with

eyes of vacancy" (62). The concluding section of "The First Fire," in contrast, emphasizes the response that Barbauld believes the fire should elicit. Instead of becoming sidetracked through daydreaming, the individual should become inspired by the fire to partake in social action. The fire which welcomes "Friends, brethren, kinsmen" (15) should be made available to the entire community, including those suffering in prison and those frozen and starved through poverty. In contrast to Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," Barbauld gives a realistic portrayal of impoverishment. She does not leave out the miserable prisoners' moldy surroundings that contaminate inner hope:

> —O wretched he, with bolts and massy bars
> In narrow cell immured, whose green damp walls,
> That weep unwholesome dews, have never felt
> Thy [the fire's] purifying influence! Sad he sits
> Day after day, till in his youthful limbs
> Life stagnates, and the hue of hope is fled
> From his wan cheek. (66-72)

She depicts the concrete details of the poverty-stricken:

> The dweller of the clay-built tenement,
> Poverty-struck, who, heartless, strives to raise
> From sullen turf, or stick plucked from the hedge,
> The short-lived blaze; while chill around him spreads
> The dreary fen, and Ague, sallow-faced,
> Stares through the broken pane (74-79)

Barbauld realistically presents the practical reality of the indigent through her creative expression, and she concludes with her poetic embrace of definite social action: "Assist him, ye / On whose warm roofs the sun of plenty shines, / And feel a glow beyond material fire!" (79-81). In her poetic vision that privileges community, Barbauld calls upon others, including the reader, to actively minister to the destitute.

Barbauld's Poetic Vision and the Quotidian

Simply incorporating the ordinary into her poetry does not place Barbauld outside the mainstream Romantic tradition. The typical aspiration of the canonical Romantic poet is to manipulate perception so that the familiar appears wondrous and strange. Wordsworth describes this technique of defamiliarization in his "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*":

> The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way. (71)

Wordsworth chooses common subjects, but his goal is to transform the familiar object into an awe-inspiring one. The natural is supposed to be enhanced by the poet's "certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way"; Wordsworth is claiming that the human intervention of the poet's transformative imagination creates the necessary unique and interesting environment that triggers sublime experience. In his "Defence of Poetry," Percy Shelley similarly argues that poetic language changes the ordinary into something more valuable:

> Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed: it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes; its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms. (505)

Shelley values the power of the poetic imagination because it "transmutes all that it touches;" it "*adds* [italics mine] beauty to that which is most deformed."

Barbauld avoids this literary technique of defamiliarization. In her poetry, creativity does not transform the commonplace; instead, her imagination highlights the ordinary

without changing it into something else. The original concrete details do not become distorted. Barbauld implicitly critiques the egotistical sublime through her celebration of a demystified quotidian. She denies that the imagination must project the poet's self onto the object and transmute the original essence in order to endow the object with literary value. Instead, Barbauld sees the magic of poetic creativity actually in the "veil of familiarity." She depicts the domestic in such a way that the quotidian itself becomes integral to her poetic vision.

In "The Groans of the Tankard" (1773), one of her more lighthearted pieces, Barbauld invokes the Muse as storyteller (1-4). The tankard, an ordinary object personified, complains about the rigidity of the Presbyterians denying it the pleasure of having alcohol inside its belly: "And mine should flow with more exalted juice" (52). The Sybil, who comes to silence the tankard, cannot stop its voice entirely: "Yet still the low murmurs creep along the ground, / And the air vibrates with the silver sound" (87-88). This "silver sound" of expression suggests the image of replenishing the tankard with liquor, wine, or beer because the drink of mirth symbolizes the celebrating community. Barbauld wrote this poem after an acquaintance of her father's had suggested that their family-tankard be put to better use than a water pitcher.[37] She was pleased with her father's decision to comply with his friend's request, as the change from water to a more spirited refreshment enhances an ambiance of friendly community that embraces the daily routine of hospitality. The concrete detail or practical use of the tankard never becomes lost or distorted. While the alcoholic content of the tankard will loosen up the tongue, the host and the visitor(s) will be able to exchange stories as they partake in this social ritual. Barbauld's depiction of the quotidian appeals to shared experience through its realistic detail. The very word "community" derives from its root meaning of "common." The community is directly related to the quotidian because both emphasize common, shared experience, such as this social custom of drinking together.

Stuart Curran recognizes that Romantic women writers are interested in incorporating everyday life into their poetry, which he calls "an investment in quotidian tones and details" ("I" 203). Curran also suggests that the very act of their writing builds community because it alleviates a sense of alienation expressed in their work ("I" 205). Curran's observations are particularly useful because they intimate a connection between Romantic women's writing, which invests itself in the quotidian, and the building of community. However, Barbauld is not seeking to alleviate her own alienation, but to share her poetic vision with others. It is not only the act of writing, but her very Muse, which engages in community. I am suggesting that Barbauld explores the quotidian in her effort to sustain community. In this way, she seeks to replace the Muse of the solitary poet with this "domestic Muse":

> The Muses are turned gossips; they have lost
> The buskin'd step, and clear high-sounding phrase,
> Language of gods. Come, then, domestic Muse,
> In slip-shod measure loosely prattling on
> Of farm or orchard, pleasant curds and cream,
> Or drowning flies, or shoe lost in the mire
> By little whimpering boy, with rueful face;
> Come, Muse, and sing the dreaded *Washing-Day*. ("Washing Day" 1-8)

The "high-sounding phrase, Language of gods" suggests that only the elite poet can have access to such an elevated language. In contrast, Barbauld's Muse is "prattling on," successfully communicating through "gossip." This gossip is the friendly conversational dialogue that reaches every person through its details of common experience. Everyone can identify with the chores of farm life, the making of curds and cream, the futile struggle against flies, or the piteous look of a boy who has lost his shoe in the mud.

Barbauld begins her poem "Washing-Day" (1797) with that invocation to the "domestic Muse." Then she meticulously delineates everyone's involvement in the routine event of washing clothes:

> ere the first grey streak of dawn,
> The red-arm'd washers come and chase repose.

. . . . . .
the very cat,
From the wet kitchen scared, and reeking hearth,
Visits the parlour, an unwonted guest.
. . . . . .
for then the maids,
I scarce knew why, looked cross, and drove me from them;
Nor soft caress could I obtain, nor hope
Usual indulgencies; jelly or creams,
Relique of costly suppers, and set by
For me their petted one; or butter'd toast,
When butter was forbid; or thrilling tale
Of ghost, or witch, or murder—so I went
And shelter'd me beside the parlour fire:
There my dear grandmother, eldest of forms,
Tended the little ones, and watched from harm,
Anxiously fond, tho' oft her spectacles
With elfin cunning hid, and oft the pins
Drawn from her ravell'd stocking, might have sour'd
One less indulgent.—
At intervals my mother's voice was heard,
Urging dispatch; briskly the work went on,
All hands employed to wash, to rinse, to wring,
To fold, and starch, and clap, and iron, and plait. (13-14, 16-18, 59-77)

The poem is told from the point of view of an adult speaker retrospectively commenting upon her childhood experience of washing day. The little girl knows that some day she will take her own part in the actual washing, while for now she is being exposed to all the specifics of this common incident. Donna Landry criticizes Barbauld for the forgetting and silencing of the red-arm'd washers, or those members of the poorer working class (272-73). Although Barbauld does not explore their perspective, she is not forgetting or silencing them; in fact, she is describing everyone's participation in an important communal process. The red-armed washers come prepared for the arduous work that lies ahead. Even the cat leaves the kitchen to become a witness, while the maids turn their full attention to the task at hand. The grandmother, a pillar of concern and patience, takes care of the mischievous children who hide her spectacles and take out her sewing pins. The mother's business-like voice manages the affair. No one is forgotten or ignored; instead, Barbauld has given these mundane details of everyone's involvement. Furthermore, the fact that the

maids choose to tell the speaker "thrilling tale[s] / Of ghost, or witch, or murder" (65-66) on all the other days intimates the regular routine of storytelling, another traditional social activity. The domestic Muse revels in the everyday, creating stories of communal experience; the quotidian nurtures an experience that recognizes the substantial reality of other people.

The poem concludes with the imagery of the bubbles, suggesting creative imagination's interrelation with (not transformation of) the commonplace:

> Sometimes thro' hollow bole
> Of pipe amused we blew, and sent aloft
> The floating bubbles, little dreaming then
> To see, Mongolfier, thy silken ball
> Ride buoyant thro' the clouds—so near approach
> The sports of children and the toils of men.
> Earth, air, and sky, and ocean, hath its bubbles,
> And verse is one of them—this most of all. (79-86)

I agree with Elizabeth Kraft's analysis that Barbauld sets the bubble up as analogous with instead of in opposition to the Montgolfier balloon ("Anna" 26).[38] The bubble imagery "hinges on the recognition of the balloon as a positive achievement, the realization of a dream" (38). Like the balloon's success as a scientific invention, the bubbles of the wash mean positive achievement. I would qualify Kraft's contention that the pejorative connotation of the bubbles as "silly chimeras" gives way to "whimsy and play," which are "important manifestations of the creative imagination's transformative power" (36-37). Barbauld does not see imagination as transforming the ordinary into something different from its original essence. Kraft says that "Washing Day" "attests to the way the creative imagination can flourish in a mundane setting" (33); however, Barbauld suggests that not only does the imagination flourish in a mundane setting, but it is does so without distorting the reality of the ordinary. The bubbles of the wash are not illusions but are a real part of the practical work of cleaning. The children actually blow bubbles through a pipe as part of their play. Furthermore, Barbauld is not celebrating the whimsical nature of poetry, but is

embracing the serious impact that it can have on society. Her poetry can be lighthearted and mirthful, but she would not consider her poetry to be whimsical or silly. In an introduction to Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*, her praise of his "building the throne of virtue so near the bower of Beauty" (21) evidences that she highly values imagination's association with virtue. In her allegorical prose work entitled *The Hill of Science: A Vision*, the narrator ultimately encounters something which she values more than the fame of science: the happiness of virtue (*Works* 2.170).[39] In the poem "Washing-Day" itself, Barbauld creates the bubble imagery as an integral part of her *moral* vision. The magic of the creative imagination found within the sphere of the bubble is integrated with the practical work of the laundry. When the bubble bursts, a chimera is not exposed.[40] Instead, the water from the bubbles splashes out, mingling with "the sports of children and the toils of men" (84). The droplets of water joining the circle of the water cycle symbolize members of the community forming their own circle. Barbauld's bubble imagery is a poetic metaphor for practical involvement with the community; society should engage in such mundane activities as washing because everyone is participating in a positive achievement: "All hands employed to wash, to rinse, to wring, / To fold, and starch, and clap, and iron, and plait" (76-77). Verse, as a bubble itself (85-86), has the special power of using poetic language to bring people together to participate in social activity. Barbauld's creative imagination engages in the everyday world of community.

"Chamber of Life"

In a letter to J. H. Reynolds, John Keats compares various states of living to different rooms of a mansion. I find his descriptions to be particularly useful because he inadvertently distinguishes between canonical Romantic poetry and Barbauld's poetry which remains outside the tradition dominated by the egotistical sublime. Keats characterizes his (and Reynolds') current existence in the Chamber of Maiden-Thought:

> I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me—The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think...[in] the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought,...we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing ones nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression—whereby This Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages—We see not the balance of good and evil. We are in a Mist—*We* are now in that state. [41]

Although Keats deceives himself into thinking that the Chamber of Maiden-Thought brings him to a closer identification with human nature ("sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man"), Barbauld critiques this self-deluding melancholy gloom. As we have seen, Barbauld exposes the negative consequences of remaining within this Chamber of Maiden-Thought: "Dreams hang on every leaf; unearthly forms / Glide thro' the gloom, and mystic visions swim / Before the cheated sense..." ("To Mr. S. T. Coleridge" 7-9). Barbauld recognizes that the "Mist" and the "darkness" of the Chamber of Maiden-Thought signify an intense and elevated experience of inwardness that seeks connectedness but subsumes the practical reality of who or what is different from or other than the self. The canonical Romantic poets often project their "Thought" (imagination) onto the "Maiden" (the Other).

While Keats admits that he cannot fully articulate its milieu because the door is "yet shut upon" him, he does describe a third chamber, the "Chamber of Life," as "a lucky and a gentle one—stored with the wine of love—and the Bread of Friendship."[42] Barbauld has entered this chamber, for she does fully articulate the "wine of love—and the Bread of Friendship" in her poetry. In this "Chamber of Life," the self respects other people as real human beings instead of objectifying them, connects to others through a mutuality of affection, and fulfills social responsibility. Barbauld is also rejoicing in the inherent worth of the familiar, for she sees mundane detail as nurturing the shared, common experience of community. Reacting against the self-deluding mysticism of the egotistical sublime, Anna Letitia Barbauld chooses a socially engaged imagination, one which converses with the vibrant community.

Notes

[1] Actually, Barbauld was not yet married at the time of the first publication of *Poems*. (She married Rochemont Barbauld in May 1774.) The reviews therefore referred to her by her maiden name of Aikin. The *Monthly Review* praises her: "We congratulate the public on so great an accession to the literary world, as the genius and talents of Miss Aikin. We very seldom have an opportunity of bestowing praise with so much justice, and so much pleasure" (Woodfall 137; qtd. in McCarthy and Kraft xxi). By 1777, *Poems* had gone through five editions. A sixth edition was published in 1792 and a seventh American edition in 1820. See McCarthy and Kraft xxi, xxxi-xxxiii; Rodgers 57. Barbauld also became known for her prose essays and children's writing.

Barbauld continued to compose poetry throughout her life, although scathing reviews of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812) prompted her decision not to publish any more of her work. See Aikin lii; Croker; Keach; Moore 68; Rodgers 140-43. Barbauld's niece Lucy Aikin collected many of her aunt's poems and prose pieces together for publication in *Works* in 1825. McCarthy and Kraft, in their new researched edition, have included all of Barbauld's poetry. All of my textual references to Barbauld's poetry are to McCarthy and Kraft's edition.

[2] Feminist scholarship has awakened a recent interest in studying Romantic women writers. Unfortunately, Barbauld is still generally marginalized as a rather insignificant minor poet. Although *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* includes her in its most recent edition (sixth ed.), she is categorized as a second-order poet.

Coleridge's and Charles Lamb's particularly insulting remarks have only served to enforce the exclusion of Barbauld from the status of a major poet in the literary canon. Coleridge calls her "'Mistress Bare and Bald,'" and Lamb includes her as one of his two "'bald ladies'" (qtd. in McCarthy and Kraft xxxiv, 218n42).

[3] "Letter to Richard Woodhouse," 27 October 1818 (Keats 418). Keats also makes the following comment about the egotism of writers like Wordsworth: "are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist—Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself—" See "Letter to J. H. Reynolds," 3 February 1818 (Keats 376-77).

[4] See Weiskel 48-62.

[5] Mellor does not specifically analyze Barbauld's work, but this general assertion is applicable to Barbauld's poetry.

[6] W. J. B. Owen's text for Wordsworth's "Preface" is based upon *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems*, London, 1805, i. i-lxiv (68).

[7] At the time of publication of "To Mr. S. T. Coleridge," Barbauld and Coleridge were on friendly terms. Their friendship later soured, and Coleridge stooped to ridiculing her through name-calling. See McCarthy and Kraft 296.

[8] McFarland says, "The delicacy of the single bee, symbolizing in the same way as its Theocritan plural, points the path for the solitary poet to rejoin a pastoral society, and the bonding of his solitariness to his friends' socialness is supplied by the agency of nature" (21).

[9] Note Coleridge's use of "perchance" (8) and "perhaps" (24), which denotes that the poet's vision is hypothetical.

[10] Also from *Remarks on Mr. Gilbert Wakefield's Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public or Social Worship*

[11] Ross asserts that Shelley does critique the egotistical sublime through the story of the poet's destruction but that the narrator also falls into the trap of the egotistical sublime (*Contours* 147-48).

[12] Ross does not seem to include "Ode to the West Wind" as an example of Shelley's disruption of community. I disagree with Ross' interpretation of the ending of this poem as a moment of identification with others (139).

[13] See Tayler and Luria, who include Byron's Astarte in their discussion of how the male Romantic poets create woman as a projection of their imagination (115-16). See also Hoeveler, who calls Astarte a "solipsistic phantom of a woman," created by the imagination of "the romantic egotist, (otherwise known as the Byronic hero)" (108-9).

[14] Qtd. in Tayler and Luria 118.

[15] Armstrong argues that Barbauld is making "a subtle connection between the seizing up of the woman's physical being in 'cramp' or paralysis and her exclusion from the public sphere where goods and wealth circulate" (23). Armstrong is making an analogy from the icehouse's freezing technique to patriarchal society's desire to preserve the importance of women's role in the home while excluding her from the public sphere. I am taking Armstrong's observation that the icehouse both destroys and preserves the fruit and dairy products to suggest that the icehouse represents the destructive egotistical sublime that objectifies the woman in the effort to preserve her beauty in poetry.

[16] See Almeida: "True melancholy is the antidote to false melancholy" (175).

[17] See McCarthy and Kraft 321.

[18] See Armstrong 17; McCarthy and Kraft 267, 289.

[19] In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft vehemently accuses Milton:

> Thus Milton describes our first frail mother; though when he tells us that women are formed for softness and sweet attractive grace, I cannot comprehend his meaning, unless, in the true Mahometan strain, he meant to deprive us of souls, and insinuate that we were beings only designed by sweet attractive grace, and docile blind obedience, to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wing of contemplation. (19)

[20] Some contemporary critics fall into the same trap as Wollstonecraft. For example, Kathleen Hickok says that Barbauld "employed traditional flower imagery to endorse what society then held to be women's true vocation: to please men" (34). See also Armstrong, who calls "To a Lady" an "innocuous poem" (17).

[21] Bloom links the concluding open casement image with "the openness of the imagination toward the heart's affections" (*Visionary* 397).

[22] See also Ross, *Contours* 167-177. Ross says that Keats makes the feminine into "a naturally inviolate sign (a presence that can be neither sacrificed nor victimized)" but that "in his 'mature poetry' he is forced to contain or to crystalize the feminine as a sign of his manhood, as evidence of his self-control" (173).

[23] "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour"; Except for the *Prelude*, all references to William Wordsworth's poetry are from the Yale edition, ed. by John O. Hayden. Any citations from the *Prelude* are from the 1850 edition, as given by the Norton critical edition, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill.

[24] For example, Susan M. Levin gives an analysis of how W. Wordsworth misrepresents Dorothy as "childlike, naïve, respondent" (16); his "aggressive ego subjugates all that is not the self" (16). Diane Long Hoeveler describes Dorothy as the mirrored ego ideal of William's younger self (95). See also Ross, "Naturalizing."

[25] Elizabeth A. Fay similarly asserts that Dorothy engages in the community of shared voices instead of the solitude of the sublime (152, 225-26). Susan M. Levin says that Dorothy is writing within a feminine romanticism that celebrates the women's role as "keepers of community" (173).

[26] See Ross, *Contours* for an analysis of the association of community in the work of Felicia Hemans, another Romantic woman poet (274-315).

[27] "To the Baron de Stonne, who had wished at the next Transit of Mercury to find himself again between Mrs. La Borde and Mrs. B[arbauld]"

[28] Barbauld's use of the word "Fancy" in her poems coincides with the denotation of "imagination." She does not make the distinction that Samuel Taylor Coleridge describes in his *Biographia Literaria*.

[29] This letter is dated 15 Feb. 1786.

[30] All citations from William Wordsworth's *Prelude* are from the 1850 edition, as given by the Norton critical edition, ed. by Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill. All other references to Wordsworth's poetry are from the Yale edition, ed. by John O. Hayden.

[31] See Tayler and Luria, who include Coleridge's Abyssinian maid in their discussion of how the male Romantic poets create woman as a projection of their imagination (115-16).

[32] McCarthy and Kraft identify the probable identity of Lissy as Elizabeth Rigby, a friend of Barbauld's (260n34). Also, it is of significant interest to note that Barbauld enjoyed being a part of a network of female writers/friends, such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Hannah More, Amelia Alderson Opie, Joanna Baillie, and Maria Edgeworth.

[33] See McCarthy and Kraft 318.

[34] The reviews of her *Poems* (1773) were generally favorable. See McCarthy and Kraft xxxi-xxxiii. See also Rodgers 57. *The Monthly Review* mostly praises Barbauld but does fault her for not being "feminine" enough: "We hoped the *Woman* was going to appear" (Woodfall 133; qtd. in McCarthy, "'We'" 113). This criticism seems based upon the fact that her classical education is evident in her poetry, particularly because of the Latin and Greek allusions. *The Monthly Review* suggests that her poetry is not "feminine" enough because she did not receive the proper kind of education (Woodfall 137).

The one time that Barbauld is marked as having crossed over the line of what was then considered as acceptable for women's poetry is in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812). John Wilson Croker, reviewer for the *Quarterly Review*, criticizes her for turning to satire. See Aikin lii; Croker; Keach; Moore 68; Rodgers 140-43. Even in this poem that marked the end of her publishing career, Barbauld is advocating social action. See Keach for an analysis of Barbauld's prophecy of doom for Britain in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven.*

[35] See also Curran, "Women" 190.

[36] See McCarthy and Kraft 244-45; Murch 72.

[37] See McCarthy and Kraft 257.

[38] Messenger and Landry contrast the Montgolfier balloon of masculine dominance with the bubbles that celebrate women's work (Kraft, "Anna" 26).

[39] The figure of Virtue personified says, "Science may raise you to eminence, but I alone can guide you to felicity!" (*Works* 2.170).

[40] I therefore disagree with Ross when he says, "This very poem, Barbauld suggests, is most of all a bubble: a silly game, a little dream, a silken ball riding the clouds, a world magically blown from her

pen only to pop into nothingness" (*Contours* 229). Barbauld does not view her poetry as silly; nothing could be more serious to her.

[41] "Letter to J. H. Reynolds," 3 May 1818 (Keats 397).

[42] "Letter to J. H. Reynolds," 3 May 1818 (Keats 398).

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